



New York - New Jersey
Harbor Estuary Program

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

of the New York – New Jersey
Harbor Estuary Program

www.HarborEstuary.org

NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

Seamen's Church Institute, 241 Water ST, NYC

MINUTES

Introductions

Roland Lewis welcomed participants and all attendees introduced themselves.

Vote to add new CAC members

CAC members voted and approved the appointment of Patricia Doyle (Passaic River Institute, Montclair State University) as a new CAC member. Starting earlier this year, Patricia has been regularly attending CAC meetings and was welcomed to the group.

Update on HEP-funded stewardship projects

Presentations followed on the three stewardship projects funded by HEP in 2010.

- **EcoCaching Discovery Trail**

Barbara LaRocco, president of Going Coastal, Inc. talked about the EcoCaching Discovery Trail project. Geocaching is a popular type of treasure hunt that uses GPS (Geographical Positioning System) technology. EcoCaching is a virtual form of geocaching where the treasures are features of the environment (the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary in this case). Two discovery trails will be set up—one at Liberty State Park and another at Inwood Hill Park—that will include field experiences and hands-on interactive tasks. The trails will be available to anyone with a GPS device (such as a smart phone) but GPS units will also be available for loan at the parks. These are sturdy units that can be easily updated by Parks personnel if needed. In addition, several middle schools will be taken to the trails. The Liberty State Park trail will be unveiled in April 2011. The project is self-sustaining thanks to the commitment by the National Geological Society of America to host the information online. In addition, the project is interactive and participants can upload their own information, pictures, and comments, improving and keeping the project alive.

Louis Kleinman expressed interest in incorporating this activity at MWA's annual City of Water event. *Bob Alpern* suggested that Metro Globe could be a possible useful contact for Going Coastal. For a video on a similar project, please visit <http://www.wltx.com/news/story.aspx?storyid=103476&catid=67> and view the video on the right side.

Citizens Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Michelle Doran McBean, Future City, Inc. ✦ 908-659-0689
Roland Lewis, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance ✦ 212-935-9831

- **Youth Stewardship Program**

Then *Jeanne DuPont*, Executive Director of Rockaway Waterfront Alliance (RWA), talked about the Youth Stewardship Program. This program took place over the summer and it was an intensive, service learning, environmental stewardship program focused on Norton Basin and Summerville Basin. *Jeanne* stressed that the project could not have come to fruition without HEP's support which, among other things, enabled RWA to purchase kayaks, allowing for more students to participate. There were two parts to the project: one was debris removal at several locations—some of which are only accessible by water—and a second part focused on water quality testing around Edgemere Park (a former landfill). This project has been inspiring for the whole community and other schools joined as well, including disabled children who were chaperoned by more experienced students participating in the Youth Summer Program, fostering new links and a sense of responsibility and belonging. Many organizations and individuals were instrumental in making this project a success by mentoring students, including a local marina, Don Riepe (American Littoral Society) and Rebecca Schultz (NYC Soil and Water Conservation District). Students learned numerous skills including how to safely operate a kayak, swim, and even surf (thanks to a local group that spontaneously volunteered to teach) and also interacted with wildlife, including horseshoe crabs spawning at Dubos Point and oysters that are part of a nearby experimental project. *Jeanne* mentioned that Rockaway Waterfront Alliance is the only organization in the Rockaway peninsula doing these types of activities. RWA had received small amounts of money from discretionary funds, but the group does not expect any support from that source this year.

- **EnvironMentors for the Elizabeth River / Arthur Kill Watershed**

Finally, *John Dobosiewicz* provided an update of Keane University's EnvironMentors for the Elizabeth River / Arthur Kill Watershed project. This is one of nine chapters of the EnvironMentors program of the National Council for Science and the Environment throughout the US, and it was created in 2010. The project will bring together university faculty and students with groups of local high school students to collaborate on studying place-based issues of importance to the future stakeholders of the estuary. The program offers incentives such as scholarships for high school students. Students will be presenting results of their research at an annual meeting in Washington, DC. The project has a coordinator who is paid by the university and thus provides significant matching funds. An online community is being built that will allow participants to communicate. Kean University so far has recruited 21 university mentors and 16 high school students and is hoping to reach 24 students in each category. Mentor-mentee pairs will choose from several project topics, including water quality & land use, invasive species, and pharmaceuticals in the Elizabeth River among many others. The project was officially kicked off at the Estuary Day event in Elizabeth on October 1, 2010.

Update on HEP Budget process for 2011

Michelle Doran-McBean and *Gabriela Munoz* informed the group about the schedule for HEP's budget process. The Management and Policy Committees are currently updating the Action Plan for HEP, which will guide HEP's activities for the next few years (and for which the CAC has provided invaluable input). Once the Action Plan is finalized, overall priorities for funding will be set by the Management and Policy Committees. After that, the CAC will have an opportunity to suggest specific projects that its members would like to see funded. *Michelle* thanked the group for the effort and involvement in the budget process for 2010 and reminded the group that some projects could be more appropriate for funding under existing HEP grants programs.

Follow up/action items:

- CAC members will be notified when priority actions are finalized and guidance will be provided for the CAC's input on projects for HEP's 2011 budget.

Discussion on priorities and process for HEP stewardship grants

Gabriela asked the CAC for suggestions on specific topics for the next grant cycle and ways to encourage smaller community organizations to apply and have a better chance of being funded. Because there is an overlap between stewardship and public access events, *Gabriela* has been in touch with Dorina Frizzera, chair of the Public Access Work Group, to see if a single request for proposals for both stewardship and public access events would be more convenient.

Barbara LaRocco indicated that a big concern for small community groups is likely the fact that funds are not awarded up front, but rather reimbursed after expenses are incurred and this poses a large burden, even for small amounts of money. It was suggested to explore the possibility of groups applying for bridge loans, although some of these arrangements may be available only for much larger sums than those awarded by HEP. It was also noted that award recipients can request a reimbursement as soon as they spend money and that New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission processes these requests promptly.

Dan Mundy said that it would be useful to have small grants for projects like creating webpages to promote the organization's activities. *Gabriela* noted that HEP grants are usually broad enough to accommodate a variety of projects and award sizes; even if the focus or the RFP is on specific types of projects, there usually is a category for "other" stewardship projects and applicants are always encouraged to discuss the suitability of their projects before submitting an application.

Robin Kriesberg suggested that it would be good to fund green infrastructure-related projects and also that having information sessions to walk applicants through the application should be helpful to organizations. *Gabriela* clarified that every year there are information sessions and that all applicants are strongly encouraged to participate. In previous years these sessions were face-to-face and attendance was low. Last year a webinar was held instead and participation was much increased. Webinars will likely be used in the future. In addition, the RFP encourages applicants to contact HEP with questions. Last year the RFP included a category for green infrastructure projects and there will likely be one this year as well.

Bob Alpern observed that CAC meetings are too infrequent and short to address these issues properly and suggested, as in the past, having a grants subcommittee; he volunteered to be part of it. *Bob* also reminded the group that in the past collaboration between grantees was required. *Gabriela* thought it would be useful to have a subcommittee working more closely with HEP staff in preparation for the RFP. There were some concerns regarding the time commitment to participate in this group. *Gabriela* indicated that any level of involvement and input would be useful and welcome, and that a few phone calls may be sufficient.

Follow up/action items:

- *Gabriela* will follow up on the subcommittee idea.
- All interested CAC members are welcome to volunteer for the subcommittee.

Discussion on NJ Co-chair election

Roland announced that elections for a NJ co-chair would be held during next meeting. Michelle can be re-elected for another 2-year term and she is willing to serve a second term but other NJ candidates can be postulated. As last time, most of the election process will be handled via email.

Follow up/action items:

- The HEP office will send communications requesting nominations. Once the candidates are announced, a deadline for email voting will be set.

Update on NJ oyster projects

NY/NJ Baykeeper was not able to participate in the meeting but sent a written update that Gabriela read:

“Earle Naval Weapons Pier

We [NY/NJ Baykeeper] have been able to confirm a pre-application meeting with NJDEP for mid-January to discuss permitting needs and timeframe for a new oyster research project at the Naval Weapons Pier site. The Navy continues to support the project and has begun the process to receive internal approval for the activity. This internal approval could take up to three months.

Legislature

Following the September 16, 2010 NJ Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee hearing on the shellfish ban, the NJDEP privately met with committee members to outline their reasons for instituting the ban rather than publicly testify. Baykeeper was not invited to the meeting by NJDEP.

Next Steps: We are still awaiting follow through on NJDEP’s commitment to hold a meeting of interested stakeholders on the implications of the shellfish ban statewide and how we can collectively move forward with these important research projects, especially before any rulemaking. We believe it is critical to have FDA at the table for these discussions. Also, NJDEP rejected our request to go through Office of Dispute Resolution rather than the courts to resolve our two permit appeals.

Baykeeper has been working with Dr. Beth Ravit, Rutgers University, to develop recommendations based on successful restoration projects in other states that might be transferred to New Jersey to move this important research forward.”

Dan Mundy gave an update on Jamaica Bay projects. It appears that the water quality is sufficiently good and oysters do survive. Another project lead by Jeff Levinton showed that Jamaica Bay oysters are bigger and have more meat than oysters at more pristine reference sites. This may be because of the high nutrient levels in Jamaica Bay. Oysters are reproducing in the area, probably from Levinton’s project, but a DNA test is needed to confirm this. The next step is to carry out larger projects and at this point the main barriers are regulatory rather than monetary. The National Parks Service (NPS) controls a large part of Jamaica Bay and there are obstacles working with them on oyster projects. *Barbara* pointed out that controls for poaching are important in Jamaica Bay and *Dan* explained that all projects are subtidal and use rebars that protect against poaching.

Bart Chezar also commented that at his site in Bayridge Flats oyster drills are becoming a big problem. Previous, smaller projects were usually protected by cages and were off the bottom. The current one is on the bottom and that seems to foster some of these predators.

Bob Alpern suggested that CAC ask EPA to approach the NPS to solve the regulatory impediments. *Dan* said that for now they are using the Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) to stress the importance of moving forward with these projects.

Note: for more information about some of the current oyster projects, including some mentioned here, see the Summer 2010 issue of The Tidal Exchange at <http://www.harborestuary.org/newsletters.htm>]

Update on October 5 meeting with Region 2 CACs and EPA Regional Administrator and communications with San Juan Bay Estuary Program CAC

Roland briefly recounted the meeting. Judith Enck, U.S. EPA Region 2 Regional Administrator convened a meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committees of the six National Estuary Programs (NEPs) in EPA Region 2 (NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program, Long Island Sound Study, Peconic Estuary Program, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Barnegat Bay Partnership, and San Juan Bay) to learn about their interests and priorities and to provide an opportunity for CACs to interact and learn from each other. She started the meeting with a presentation and talked about her priorities and her appreciation for the CACs and their work. Then there were breakout groups to talk about common issues affecting the CACs, including funding, communication, and how to bring more diversity.

Michelle mentioned that after the meeting she spoke with the Regional Administrator about fish advisory issues. Michelle wants to draft a letter with Roland asking the Regional Administrator to initiate a meeting on these issues. The CAC agreed this was a good idea.

Michelle has also been in touch with the San Juan Bay CAC Chair about opportunities for partnerships in Region 2. She will have a follow up conversation after this CAC meeting. President Obama recently signed an Executive Order (EO) to advance education for latino communities, including science. Michelle will explore whether this is something useful, although this EO is programmatic rather than a funding opportunity.

Bob Alpern also indicated that climate change is an issue affecting all CACs, and that Estuary Programs have the opportunity to participate in the Climate Ready Estuaries program. Kate Boicourt pointed out that HEP is looking into this but the Climate Ready office is still working out the process for the next funding cycle. In the past they have provided assistance to develop plans for climate change or technical assistance for specific projects. Bob suggested asking the Long Island Sound Study to give a full presentation on their climate change efforts during the next joint meeting of the CACs.

Barbara LaRocco announced that Going Coastal has finished their research on environmental justice and fishing and has published a white paper available at http://www.scribd.com/full/41464909?access_key=key-182rb2ei8h44x7upqfib. Bob Alpern mentioned that City Council produced a report on foodworks, dealing with most aspects of the food industry in New York City but there is no mention of fish or other aquatic organisms. Environmental justice was a concern in the report but in terms of supermarket distribution and it would be important to suggest they address the fishing issue.

Update on collaboration with Long Island Sound Study CAC

Topics suggested for this meeting are climate change (see previous section), funding issues, and unified STAC for LISS and HEP (see Open Forum section).

Updates/action items:

- The LISS will hold its next CAC meeting in NY in March 2011. A specific date has not yet been selected. HEP Co-chairs will plan the joint meeting.
- HEP co-chairs to draft letter to EPA Region 2 Regional Administrator.

Update on HEP participation at the 2010 NJ League of Municipalities annual conference

Michelle reminded the group that this started as a suggestion of the CAC and she thanked HEP staff and others that worked hard to materialize this. The experience was positive and a good start, and several materials were prepared that will continue to be used at other events (see <http://www.harborestuary.org/managementcomm.htm#njs2010>). The Mayor of Elizabeth, Christian Bollwage was very positive regarding the outcomes of the meeting and would like to do this again.

Bob Alpern reminded that there used to be a Local Government Committee which was then merged with the CAC but there is currently no real representation from local government. If there was a good response to the conference, this idea could be revived.

Kate mentioned that the public outreach meeting for the Arthur Kill/Kill Van Kull Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP) planning region will take place at Elizabeth City Hall and the Mayor will be sending the invitations, which will allow for further outreach.

Bob Alpern complained about the Habitat Work Group not being more inclusive. *Kate* noted that HEP's Restoration Work Group will have a public meeting on January 20th at the Customs House and that everybody is invited. An announcement will be made shortly.

Open Forum

Maggie Flanagan suggested putting in the agenda for next meeting to look at the nomination process for CRP sites and have the CAC help bring attention to overlooked sites. She also pointed out that the nomination form has no check boxes for features that are common to urban sites, such as bulkheads. *Kate* clarified that the nomination form is being revised to streamline the nomination process.

Bob Alpern urged to re-establish the connection with Chuck Warren as a representative of the CAC in the Policy Committee. *Roland* reminded that Chuck Warren has participated in recent meetings and has been involved in exploring funding opportunities.

Bob also asked suggesting the next Management Committee to create a single Science and Technical Advisory Committee for the whole region, including Long Island Sound Study and HEP, and also bring up this issue during the next joint CAC meeting.

Manuel Russ recommended forming a committee to evaluate new technologies.

Barbara advised HEP to have a stronger presence in the Harbor Ops Committee, which deals with recreational access, habitat use and transportation. *Roland* indicated that Louis Kleinman is MWA's representative to the Harbor Ops Committee and he anticipated that the Committee would be very open to the idea of HEP participation.

Dan Mundy announced that there is an agreement in place to invest \$100 million to upgrade two waste water treatment plants in Jamaica Bay, which is expected to cut nitrogen loads in half. This is a historic agreement that also allocates \$15 million for marsh restoration and sets goals and milestones for Jamaica Bay for the next 15 years (for a press release on the agreement, please see

http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2010a%2Fpro85-10.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1).

Next CAC Meeting

Date and location will be announced after coordinating with the Long Island Sound Study CAC.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.

ATTENDEES

- Robert Alpern
- Kate Boicourt, NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program
- Don Chesley, Stevens Institute of Technology
- Bart Chezar, Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club
- John Dobosiewicz, Kean University
- Michelle Doran McBean, Future City, Inc.
- Patricia Doyle, Passaic River Institute, Montclair State University
- Jeanne DuPont, Rockaway Waterfront Alliance
- Maggie Flanagan, South Street Seaport Museum
- Louis Kleinman, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
- Robin Kriesberg, Bronx River Alliance
- Barbara LaRocco, Going Coastal, Inc.
- Roland Lewis, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
- Matthew Malina, Teacher
- Dan Mundy, Jamaica Bay Eco Watchers
- Gabriela Munoz, NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program
- Manuel Russ, Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
- Bill Sheehan, Hackensack Riverkeeper
- Clay Sherman, NJ DEP DWM
- Adina Taylor, Floating the Apple, Inc.